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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes what was learned from a 3-year Manchester (United Kingdom) project designed to combat racism in higher education and the community. The lessons learned from the study are intended to help other colleges focus on the issue of racism and how it can be tackled openly in a community education context. After some background information about the aims of the project, a section on staff development describes a course in which staff considered, among other issues, the "right" way for white staff to respond to black students who had experience with racism that the staff could not share. Lessons learned from the course are summarized in the document, as are working practices decided on by participants in a later seminar course. The findings of an evaluation of the courses are also reported. Curriculum development workshops are described, along with features that contributed to the workshops' success and a checklist for evaluating antiracist materials. A flowchart for developing antiracist curriculum appears. The last section of the document lists strategies undertaken by Central Manchester College in order to combat racism. Among the strategies described are those concerning a development conference, college structures and policy implementation, administrative units on access and antiracism, curriculum development, and implementing curriculum change. Five examples of resulting courses are briefly described.

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This bulletin summarises the results of two linked FEU projects (RP233 and RP234) which were part of an ambitious attempt by Manchester LEA to support the implementation of the Education Committee's anti-racist policies and to encourage responsiveness to the multicultural population in Central Manchester. The collaborating institutions were the Central Area Community Education Service and Central Manchester College, an amalgamation of three FE colleges all with reputations extending well beyond their catchment areas which, it was recognised, had limited their effectiveness in serving their local Mancunian population, many of whom were from the black communities. The Chief Education Officer took a personal interest in the projects and, in a letter to all institutions involved, said:

'We feel that this project represents an exciting and important step towards greater collaboration between further education and community education, towards greater responsiveness on the part of education to the community, and towards the development of a genuinely multicultural post-school sector.'

The lessons learned and summarised in this bulletin are particularly useful for colleges which decide to focus on the issue of racism in education and society and how it can be tackled openly in a community education context.

Background

The Community Education service had a record of providing basic education and responding to community initiatives, especially in the Moss Side area where a specialist centre occupied a prominent position in the modern shopping complex. But it was recognised that there were imbalances in provision across the city and shortcomings in some areas. In particular, the opportunities to progress to college courses and to gain qualifications were limited.

Central Manchester College recognised that it had to take positive and public initiatives to build links with its local communities if it were to be successful in opening up its specialist FE provision to all. A forceful marketing policy targeted specifically at local communities, an active and innovative Vocational Preparation Unit, and a new specialist Access unit were aspects of the college's approach.

Developments unrelated to the FEU projects, but important to the aims, occurred at the same time. This considerably eased the situation and enabled students to plan a progression route. The Manchester Open College Federation, with its system of modules and credit accumulation, was a particularly important step.

Anti-racist Strategies in College and Community

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It should also be noted that the projects extended over three and a half years, including a six-month gap and a final year entirely funded by Manchester LEA. Although some of the immediate contexts may have dated, the problems faced and the lessons learned are still relevant.

Aims

The overall aims of the projects were to develop awareness in post-16 education of the effects of racism and the needs of the black communities, and to promote access to educational opportunities for black students by:

- opening up access to mainstream FE courses by reviewing recruitment procedures and course methods and content;
- developing and testing a model institutional strategy for implementing a formal college multiracial policy with a strong anti-racist commitment;
- developing and testing anti-racist strategies and materials for use in curriculum and staff development in an FE institution;
- drawing on the community-based experience of the Central Community Education team to ensure that FE courses and curricula responded to the felt needs of the local community.

The project team decided to try to make progress at three levels: structural, staff (through staff development initiatives) and curriculum.

Full report

The full report* reflects the ambition of the projects, the limited resources available and the size and complexity of the organisations, which themselves underwent structural changes during the projects. It is a record of various initiatives, some successful, others less so. It contains summaries of strategies adopted for implementing anti-racist policy in college structures, accounts of a number of curriculum development initiatives, with evaluation and examples from some of the departments in which progress was made, and useful and extensive descriptions of anti-racist staff development courses (particularly in the community education service), together with materials and an honest and well-documented evaluation of their

effectiveness. It also contains sections, sometimes polemical in tone, on multicultural and anti-racist policies in FE, including a history of the various policy initiatives in Manchester since the 1970s, of the response of institutions, and of the difficulties of implementation.

This bulletin summarises those parts of the report which are of most interest to colleges outside Manchester.

Staff development

First attempts

Although staff development was not the top priority of the project teams, it was the first activity they were invited to undertake. The courses are documented in the full report and, of the four described, two, both for community education staff, are of particular interest. The earlier course, on which all the participants were white, drew in part on a methodology of race awareness training which focused on the attitudes and feelings of the group. Only in the last session did the course explore the working context of the teachers involved and what action they could take as a result of the course.

The evaluation of the course covers the consequent difficulties participants had, including 'confusion and disorientation', concerning the objectives of the course and in coming to terms with the deep-seated feelings which the analysis of racism at an individual level inevitably raise. Similarly doubts arose about the 'right' way for white tutors to respond to black students who had experience of racism which the white participants could not share. The feelings of the tutors, both black and white, about the course were mixed.

The overall response of participants was positive. The tutors felt they had learnt much themselves, and were able to apply these lessons when planning a second course. They summarised the key lessons as:

- a need to establish a positive group dynamic and identity in the early stages of a course;
- a need for clarity in objectives, and the sharing of objectives with course members;
- a need to respond to different levels of awareness: to deal with basic issues *and* to satisfy the needs of more aware members;
- a need to develop understanding of links between personal and political issues in addition to countering racist myths;

*The 300 page report, edited by Jackie Ould and Mohammed Zulficar, is available at £6 from Bill Gulam, Manchester Education Department, Crown Square, Manchester M60 3BB.

- a need to respond to feelings of insecurity, confusion and disorientation which can arise among group members on such courses;
- a need to spend time on workplace issues and strategies.

A second chance

A second course was the outcome of a period of planning and negotiation with intending participants, including a pre-course questionnaire. The participants were all community education teachers, but this time the group was not wholly white. Decisions were taken to begin the work with a focus on racism in education, using the work environments of the group as the main example of an educational context. Political aspects were given much greater prominence than personal; the trainers always remained concerned to *recognise* feelings when they were expressed, but not to provoke their expression. In any case general political and ideological issues were only covered in two sessions in the middle of the course; the ethos of the course was resolutely practical. The following set of working practices was agreed by the tutors:

- The course should be taught with a variety of techniques, and should not over-emphasise information giving.
- As much of the course as possible should be run 'in-house', without resorting to outside speakers and trainers.
- Course members should be actively involved in the learning process via exercises in the sessions (e.g. simulation exercises).
- Individuals should be expected to contribute to the total group information 'bank' (e.g. by bringing in materials for display, or reporting back on areas of private study).
- Trainers should have objectives for each session, but should also give the group a clear role in structuring the programme of the sessions.
- There should be an in-built evaluative mechanism whereby group members could report their own sense of their progress, comment on materials, presentation, felt needs and reactions.
- Trainers should meet each week after the sessions for their own evaluation of progress.
- Trainers' political terminology should be included in an early session, to stress that racism is a political issue and cannot be dealt with apolitically.

- Trainers should be conscious of any attempt that the group might make to exploit the black trainer and/or any black course members for their personal experiences. Whilst the sharing of personal history was valuable, the group should not be allowed to 'turn the spotlight' on any black people present.

The documentation of this successful course is comprehensive. It includes a rationale for the course structure and content, and a record of the planning and consultation process which led to the design of the programme. For each session, a list of objectives, the content and structure of the session and a list of resources is included. There are a description of the content of the session, including examples of contributions by participants, and an evaluation of the process of the session by tutors. The success and difficulties of each activity are recounted, as are the participants' reactions to key features of the session. The materials used are provided and extracts from the group's evaluation of the sessions are given in summary form.

This section of the report is a valuable case study of anti-racist training in action and has been circulated widely. It was used by the working groups who prepared the FEU *Staff Development for a Multicultural Society* package.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the courses by the participants and tutors yielded a number of useful points for tutors undertaking similar work.

General

- It was difficult to analyse courses 'off-the-cuff', especially where staff responsible for teaching those courses were not present. Tutors and participants needed preparation time to select which of their courses and materials they wished to analyse.
- Staff found it especially hard to see how curricula tied to external examinations could be changed.
- Staff, especially part-timers, often use existing materials for convenience — reviewing, renewing and revising materials demands time and resources.
- Much depends on the tutor's confidence and awareness — handled carefully, negative material can be useful for instigating critical discussion among students.

Structural

- It is important to have the co-operation and overt

support of senior management, in, for example, releasing participants, putting pressure on line managers, organising payment for part-time staff or arranging a venue or equipment.

- Consulting staff and responding quickly to demands proved valuable.
- Information on structural and organisational processes should be available to answer staff challenges.
- Insecurity caused by other initiatives and changes can impinge on reaction to anti-racist initiatives.

Curricular

- Structured training is needed in each curriculum area.
- It is important to demonstrate how anti-racism is relevant to all curriculum areas.
- A broad view of 'curriculum' should be incorporated to include aspects such as relationships in the classroom.
- Training should be based on actual circumstances, rather than on abstract discussion.
- There is a need for relevance in curriculum review, so that staff feel competent to analyse courses and materials.

Curriculum development

The establishment of curriculum development workshops in the community education division was a main aim of the projects. After the initial phase of staff development, it was decided to establish four subject-centred workshops on the basis of the four main curriculum areas for which the centre was responsible (Adult Basic Education (ABE), Vocational and Practical Skills, English as a Second Language (ESL) and Post-Basic General Education).

Building on the lessons learned in the staff development exercise, it was decided that anti-racist strategies should be developed in relation to the normal programme and content of the courses concerned. All the workshops started from the interests of the teachers involved, and the programme and content of the courses to be worked on was negotiated with them, using their course syllabuses, materials and texts.

The methods used in the workshops included: reviewing existing materials for racist content or bias; identifying suitable published materials; and developing new materials which were then evaluated by students and tutors. Workshops also considered classroom interaction:

the power relationships between tutors, both white and black, and white and black students; the use made of students' experience; and the particular care needed when sensitive issues, such as racist incidents, were discussed in mixed groups.

The tutors involved in the workshops consulted their own (often black) students about how racism, or current issues where racism was a main concern, should be tackled. The response from students was that they preferred such issues not to be introduced *directly* by the tutor in the classroom. They were too painful and tended to raise the emotional temperature and divert attention from other learning.

They were, however, quite happy that the *implications* of racism, in, for example, employment/unemployment, housing and South Africa, should be openly raised when they arose as part of course content.

The message was clear, and was generally agreed by the teachers participating in the workshop, that a concern for racism should *permeate* the curriculum rather than be raised as a specific topic.

Language issues were also tackled, not only in the ESL group but also in the ABE group, especially in relation to using resources which draw on the expertise of students in creole and patois.

A number of specific initiatives were taken, especially by the ABE and ESL workshops. The ABE group made use of two local events in which a number of students were involved: Anti-Apartheid Week, for which some activities and a resource pack were developed, and a town-twinning event, where Manchester was twinned with Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua. This latter was a particularly useful exercise with literacy classes, since the event was a 'Pens and Paper' campaign for literacy in Nicaragua. Students became greatly motivated and built links, initially with literacy classes in Puerto Cabezas, and subsequently letter-writing links were set up between individual students in both countries. Another fruitful activity was the organisation of a two-day residential, 'Understanding the News', in which some members of the workshops participated, with a special focus on racism in the media. Activities were developed by tutors, brought back to the workshops and then used with students, with successful results. These activities included looking at the use of tendentious and biased language and images in newspapers, the selective use of facts, the invention of stories about black people and the use of stereotypes and distorted images of black communities.

Some conclusions on curriculum development workshops

The two most successful workshops were those in ABE and ESL, which became self-sustaining and continued to meet and work after the FEU project finished. The ABE group was specifically created as an anti-racist curriculum workshop, but the ESL group used the already existing regular curriculum meetings of part-time and full-time ESL teachers. Both strategies were successful, perhaps because these workshops were directly concerned with *curriculum* and met the expressed needs of tutors. (The other two workshops both used existing meeting times which were usually devoted to issues of accreditation and assessment and did not manage to generate their own independent momentum.)

The features which appeared to contribute to the success of the groups included:

- an initial period for defining needs and interests;
- a self-defined programme;
- a genuine concern among participants to update their working methods and change the curriculum;

- a reasonable amount of flexibility for tutors in devising course material;
- a fairly homogenous curriculum area. (In both the less successful workshops, the post-basic education and the vocational/practical skills groups, the range of subjects taught by tutors was much wider.)

These conclusions are well illustrated in the section of the full report which deals with the ABE workshop. First, the participating group of tutors spent some time agreeing and defining their objectives for the workshop as:

- to share, monitor and create resources;
- to share curriculum approaches, using the group as a reference point for discussing and checking strategies;
- to share classroom problems, using the group as a source of support and advice about sensitive issues.

They then developed checklists of questions for all teachers to use in reviewing materials (see box below), and in developing anti-racist curriculum strategies in the specific context of adult basic education.

A CHECKLIST FOR ANTI-RACIST MATERIALS EVALUATION

1. Why did you choose to borrow this specific text?
2. Did you intend it as background reference or for actual use in a lesson?
3. Would any part of the text be culturally unacceptable to your students?
4. Does the text encourage students to value minority cultures?
5. Were you able to use the texts in the ways you had intended? If not, why not? Were the difficulties within the text?
6. Is the text clear in its objectives? Internally coherent? Sound in methodology?
7. Does the text in any way underestimate the intelligence/maturity/experience of your students?
8. Are the contexts relevant to the current experiences of your students.
9. Is the language authentic and relevant to your students?
10. Does the text contain information which helps your students to survive in existing social systems? Does it help them to challenge and change those systems?
11. Does the text in any way reinforce gender, race, nation or class stereotypes.
12. Does the text in any way challenge and positively seek to counter stereotyping?
13. Does it attempt to help students develop language skills for use in situations of racial discrimination/abuse?
14. Is the material attractively presented? (Quality of paper, print, illustrations, etc).
15. Is there any part of the text that you would particularly recommend to other teachers?
16. Is there any part of the text to which you have particularly strong objections?
17. Would the text benefit particularly from being used in conjunction with other texts, possible bilingual texts? Please specify.
18. Do you know of similar but better texts that are not available in the Resource Centre and which you would recommend we acquired?
19. Would the text be suitable for independent student learning?
20. If the text is not suitable for your students, can you identify any students for whom it would be?

Only then did the group suggest some answers as to why ABE tutors should be concerned with racism (and then begin to work out how this concern should be practically expressed):

- to counter myths and prejudice among white students;
- to respond to racist attitudes among white students in order to encourage sensitivity in classes;
- to acknowledge the experiences of black students as a basis for group sharing of experience;
- to encourage students to express their ideas: to 'get ideas moving' in classes;
- a wider desire to raise political consciousness.

As a conclusion to their work, the workshop tutors listed four key lessons in running successful anti-racist curriculum development workshops:

- the importance of defining curriculum development in its broadest sense;
- the value of *group* definition of priorities and agenda, for motivation, commitment and relevance;
- the functional importance of devising focused criteria for resource evaluation;
- the significance of the group's role as a support network and reference point for individual participants' problems and strategies.

Some college strategies

Although there was considerable interaction between the college and community projects, the college undertook a separate development programme of its own. The remainder of this bulletin lists some of the initiatives which will be of wider interest to other colleges.

Development conference

A staff development conference on the future of the college was held as a three-day residential, attended by over eighty members of staff including principal, senior management team and heads of department and section. The implementation of anti-racist policy in all aspects of college work and provision was an integral part of the conference, which had as its five key themes:

- NAFE and the use of staff resources;
- financial procurement;

- marketing;
- anti-racist strategies;
- technological development.

The conference had the effect of building anti-racist action into the mainstream development of the college.

College structures and policy implementation

The full report contains a useful chapter on the negotiations and discussions which led, over two years, to effective structures for implementing anti-racist policy.

These structures included:

- the principal taking personal overall responsibility for the implementation of policy;
- the establishment of a powerful anti-racist sub-committee of the Academic Board which included all faculty heads among its members;
- the establishment of anti-racist curriculum review teams in each faculty (later faculty anti-racist sub-committees);
- setting up an Access Unit, with responsibility for anti-racist strategies across the college.

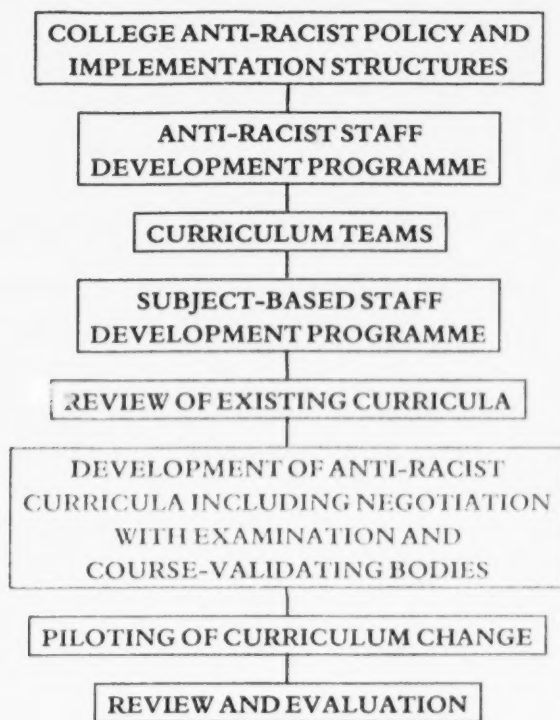
Specialist units

The setting up of the Access Unit and a college-wide anti-racist unit was attended by controversy because of the fears of marginalisation of the work of the main specialist lecturers in this field (employed under Section XI conditions). The report discusses these issues and argues that such specialist units are necessary and useful, provided their brief is clearly established and their access to management, resources and an appropriate committee structure is guaranteed.

Curriculum development

The full working of the system of anti-racist curriculum teams/sub-committees in each faculty had not been achieved by the end of the project. Nevertheless, the report gives an account of the development of a model for anti-racist curriculum development and some examples of initiatives taken in various departments. The model developed is illustrated below.

ANTI-RACIST CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: A Model for Change



Guidelines were given to each faculty on implementation of the model.

Implementing curriculum change

The diagram shows the various phases of a possible model for the adoption and implementation of anti-racist curricula. The following notes give guidance on implementation.

Anti-racist staff development programme

It is important that those who wish to participate in curriculum development should undertake an INSET programme to examine racist attitudes and practices that prevail in the education system. The course will enable participants to develop anti-racist perspectives in relation to their own work within the institution with special reference to the curriculum.

Curriculum teams

Any meaningful and structured curriculum development requires the establishment of cohesive curriculum teams, based on either specific subjects or a particular discipline. The members of the teams can be drawn primarily from those who attended the initial INSET programme, and may include other members of staff interested in curriculum development.

At this initial stage, the curriculum teams are requested to meet on a regular basis to establish a working relationship and to work out a general frame of reference to be shared by the team. The teams can identify the problems and issues which need further clarification prior to subject-based work.

Subject-based staff development programme

This phase may require the expertise of individuals and agencies external to the institution as development in many curriculum areas is limited. Nevertheless, a growing number of individuals and institutions have undertaken some work on developing skills required to examine critically the existing curricula, as well as suggestions for alternative materials and methods.

Review of existing curricula

The curriculum teams will then be in a position to review the existing curricula. In this phase, teams can prioritise the courses to be reviewed, bearing in mind the variety of courses that may exist in a large FE institution, and focus on selected courses.

Development of anti-racist curricula, teaching materials and methods

This requires a process of negotiation with examining and validating bodies which can prove protracted and challenging because of the absence of appropriate texts, work schemes and allied materials.

Piloting of curriculum change

The piloting of anti-racist strategies in the curriculum requires sensitivity, especially when involving staff who have not been part of the initial exercise. It is therefore vital to inform them about the programme regularly.

Case studies of curriculum change

Case studies of change in particular areas of the FE curriculum are described in the report. These include:

- A computer studies course targeted at unemployed black adults which aimed at developing hands-on, keyboarding, programming and machine code skills.
- A course in Indian vegetarian cookery designed to be integrated into the City and Guilds 760 Catering course, which met the syllabus requirements while allowing ethnic minority students options to develop skills for employment in restaurants providing catering appropriate to their background.
- A modular course in sound engineering and technology targeted at black students and providing accreditation at levels 3 and 4 of the Manchester Open College Federation scheme.
- A schools link course at a mainly white school at which disturbing levels of racism had been found among students. The course openly addressed issues of racism using comments made by students in written work and in a survey carried out by tutors.
- Inputs to the communication skills elements of YTS courses and Adult Work Preparation courses on racism and its effect in local and wider society.

For further copies of this bulletin and details of other FEU publications, please contact the FEU Information Centre, 2 Orange Street, London WC2H 7WE, tel: 01-321 0433 ext.256. For further information about FEU work on FE in a multicultural society, please contact Harminder Aujla at the same address.

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